



Information

Billing Mediations and Resolution Options

- **Grace Period** - Every account is provided with a 10-day grace period from their due date. This grace ensures that a cut-off cannot occur for a late payment that falls within the 10-day grace period. This is provided at no cost and does not have to be requested. All citizens are offered this relief as a part of the billing and collection process.
- **Payment Extension** - Every account is offered up to 4 payment extensions. A payment extension is granted when no more than 1 bill is past due. A payment extension is granted until the day before the next billing due date. This provides additional time to make a payment on the account. These extensions are offered at no cost and can be requested in person or via email. The customer provides identification or identifying information linking them to the account and then is requested to sign an extension form that includes the payment amount and extension due date.
- **Rereads** - Any usage that a customer is questioning is sent back out for a reread of that meter. There is no cost for a reread. This reread is completed within a 24–48-hour period and the customer’s call is returned. At this time, findings are shared with the customer, and they may choose to accept the reread findings or request mediation with the City Attorney.
- **Mediation** – At which point a customer feels the usage is either uncharacteristic or due to a leak, it is referred to mediation. This can be requested via phone, email, or in person.
 - Customer will be asked to provide a short overview of the situation with any pertinent information they deem necessary. That form is called a “**Request for Appeal**”.
 - Customer will also be allowed to forgo paying the bill that is being disputed. If a customer chooses this option, they must place a mediation deposit on the account. The mediation deposit is calculated at the average of the 3 previous billings prior to the disputed bill. That form is called a “**Notice of Scheduled Mediation and Deposit**”. The customer does not need to be present during mediation and the mediation deposit is credited to the account once mediation is complete. If the customer chooses to pay the bill in full, no mediation deposit is required. If an overage of payment is found it will be applied to the account as a credit towards future billing.
 - Currently, mediations are scheduled for Mondays at 2pm with 10 accounts seen each meeting. Prior to this month, scheduling was approximately 2 to 4 weeks out for most mediations. Due to the increase in requested mediations and the changes to address that will be addressed in the Newly Identified Remedies section.
- **Contracts** – Contracts are available at City Manager discretion to provide relief for a unique situation that may be best handled this way. These are typically situations that occur post

mediation where a bill becomes due, and mediation did not provide the adjustment to the customer.

- Contracts provide a typically 3-month period of time to repay their current balance. An contract is called an **“Agreement for Deferred Payment”**.

City of Duncan - Newly Identified Resolutions

In addition to the resolutions that are detailed out in the Billing Mediation and Available Resolutions overview, the City has identified or created several additional opportunities for relief in regard to a utility bill.

- **Payment Extension** – City Manager authorized a 5th payment extension for those who have exhausted their prior 4 offered payment extensions. This need is recognized for those who use these extensions, but who might need another to be able to get some assistance with higher utilities that the recent heat waves have yielded.
- **Mediation** – Mediator, Assistant Finance Director, and City Manager identified the increase in mediation cases in the middle of September and have currently rescheduled mediation to occur weekly with up to 20 cases heard at each mediation period. These additional mediation dates being made available allow for more cases to be settled in a timelier manner. Additional consideration is being given to scheduling a full-day mediation process to hear more cases and prevent further backlog of mediation requests occurring.
- **Contracts** – Assistant Finance Director and City Manager identified in July 2023 unique situations due to the rapid failure of electronic transmission of meter readings where a bill may have been underestimated for a period. When a manual reading was then conducted, a “catch-up” billing occurred where a normal monthly bill was calculated as well as the additional catch-up billing from the period of under-estimation. City Manager authorized the use of contracts in these situations set to match the time period of under-estimation to allow additional time to pay their utility bill. It allows for no payment to be made in the current month and the balance to be spread across the time-period of overestimation.